

Lewis and Clark County Mental Health Local Advisory Council
Intermountain Conference Room
Tuesday, December 4, 2018, 11:30 a.m.

Mission Statement: The purpose of the LAC is to assist in the improvement of Lewis and Clark County public mental health services and to review and make recommendations about Lewis and Clark County's public mental health services to the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners, as well as provide input and recommendations to the State of Montana's Mental Health Oversight Advisory Council (MHOAC) and the State of Montana's Service Area Authority (SAA) serving the community.

Notes: NAMI Smarts for Advocacy Training by Alicia Smith

1. Call to Order

Jill Steeley called the meeting to order and introduced Alicia Smith from NAMI Bozeman to present on how to effectively share important personal stories with the legislature.

Members in Attendance: Jill Steeley (Chair), Matt Furlong (Vice Chair), Drenda Niemann, Ray Roberts, Brian Coplin, Cory Bailey, David Roberts, Gary Mihelish, Kim Gardner, Michelle Marshal, and Annie Maixner.

Guests in Attendance: Alicia Smith, Alison Munson, Brandy Vail, Jess Hegstrom, Emily Munn, Julaine Beatty, Vannessa Yang, and Colleen Rahn.

Staff in Attendance: Jocelyn Olsen and Kellie McBride.

2. Personal Stories

Alicia explained the importance of sharing our stories with the legislature and helping them to be aware of how legislation affects citizens. Our stories let legislatures know that mental health needs funding, and that treatment and recovery is possible with access to the necessary resources.

Stories are less effective when they are too detailed and are not written to the specific audience.

Stories are more effective when we can put a face to the event. For example, a great way to start your story is by saying, "My name is _____ and I am the face of mental illness" or "...and there are probably ____ of you who live with mental illness."

3. Important Facts to Include

Montana is consistently in the top three states in the nation for suicide rate. People are not receiving the care they need, which compounds dropout rate, unemployment, and criminalization.

4. Tips for Writing an Effective Personal Story

- #1: your audience is not your therapist
- #2: keep your story brief and stick to the highlights
- #3: the emotion of your story should move the audience, not overwhelm them
- #4: motivate hope and recovery, don't dwell on the dark reality
- #5: make an ask, know what you want them to do

5. Sample Stories and Writing Our Story

Alicia had the group read multiple sample stories she provided then set some time aside for all in attendance to write their own personal story.

Two individuals shared their stories to the entire group. Alicia made note of the tremendous impact created by these short, to the point stories.

The larger group then split in to smaller groups of three to share stories and provide feedback.

6. Montana Legislature

Begins in January and usually ends in April. Further information is on the NAMI website.

Important tips to keep in mind when presenting to and communicating with Legislators:

- a. You may bring one page with bullet points, preferably of a certain color (ex. NAMI prints on lavender paper), and three whole punched
- b. Thank Legislators for their time
- c. Write follow-up letters on the same color paper and hand address all envelopes
- d. Be polite and present, do not criticize, and always thank them
- e. Stay until the end if presenting as questions may be asked of you later
- f. Address all Legislators appropriately
- g. Do not make faces while sitting in the room as everything is usually televised
- h. Turn cell phones off

7. Contact Alicia Smith

Alicia is available for other trainings on how to share your story with the Legislature. To ask questions or schedule training, you can call Alicia at 406-579-2420.